

Postscripts *by Jack Post*

An Englishman named John Pory stopped in at Plymouth in 1622 and wrote a report for the Earl of Southampton, treasurer and chief officer of the Virginia Company, which was disputing the right of its rival, the Council for New England, to monopolize the fishing off our coast. This was the Council which had encouraged certain merchant adventurers of London to establish the young colony at Plymouth; so John Pory came

to check up, and was duly impressed with the bounty of the fish and the shellfish that he saw.

He was enraptured with the eels, "passing sweet, fat and wholesome, having no taste at all of the mud, and are as great as ever I saw any." The herring runs in April and May astounded him, when the inhabitants took up the fishes in hogsheads, to eat all they could, and manure each hill of corn with the rest. Then in

mid-May came the bass and the bluefish, which the settlers take with seines (skeines, he called it), 500-700 small ones 2-3 feet long at a time, the 4-5 footers by hooks. He raved about the bluefish, which "in delicacy excelleth all kind of fish that ever I tasted, I except not the salmon of the Thames in his prime season."

He goes on about the lobsters "so large, so full of meat, so plentiful as no man will believe. For a knife of 3 halfpence I bought 10 lobsters that would well have dined 40 laboring men...the least boy in the ship with an hour's labor was able to feed the whole company with them for 2 days, which if they do not af-

firm upon their oaths, let me forever lose my credit!"

"Muskles and slammies (mussels and clams) they have all year long, the meaneast of God's blessings here, such as these people fat their hogs with at low water. Oysters there are none, but at Massachusetts (the future site of Boston) there are such huge ones as I am loth to report. For ordinary oysters, of which there be many, they make to be as broad as a bushel; but one among the rest the savages compared to the great cabin of the "Discovery," and grew very angry when they were laughed at or not believed."

An oyster as big as a main cabin? Well, maybe! But by

and large, Duxbury Bay teemed with fish and shellfish in Pilgrim days, as it has right up to our own times. People still talk about the great year of the scallops something over a decade ago, when any citizen could go out and harvest bushels with a few hours work. Most of us have dug quahogs and little necks, too, but both of these grow difficult to find as the pressure increases with the rise of demand. Now it looks as if the poor "slammies" may soon become an endangered

Mussels, that tasty favorite of the French, the Spanish, and the Dutch, have fared better, with substantial beds showing at low tide along Duxbury shores which have not yet been ravaged, although they are plucked at increasing rates each year. For one reason or another, the American taste has not yet discovered mussels as it has oysters and clams, even though aficionados of the little blue mollusk write recipe books and recite the virtues of the little fellow's high protein value and low calorie content, more nutritional than a steak, if you care to credit that statistic.

Whether your choice runs to mussels or not, the clam supply is dwindling to the point that Howard Johnson simply cannot get enough to fill all the fried clam orders, and the harvest has dropped from 96 million pounds in 1974 to 49 million last year; so if you crave shellfish, you had better learn to like mussels, which can be easily and efficiently grown in captivity to larger sizes and more quickly than in the wild state.

All this mussel lore has been painstakingly researched by Graham and Sarah Hurlburt of Duxbury, so it would seem logical that our town should be in the forefront of a new industry. But we are not, for the selectmen, in their infinite wisdom, refused a permit for an experimental mussel farm here; so the Hurlburts' highly successful mussel-growing test rigs are located in Narragansett Bay and Muscongus Bay in Maine. Last week the *Wall Street Journal* featured mussels and Duxbury enterprise in a front page article which emphasized the tremendous potential of this untapped food source. But it won't be in Duxbury. Who wants industry here anyhow? Not us